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The Non-Subscribing Presbyterian.

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New Year Messages.

A Happy New Year to all and "God bless us every one." It was Tiny Tim, the cripple in Dickens's Christmas Carol who shouted out that wish. And Tiny Tim the cripple may stand for all of us. None of us has come out at the end of 1928 a complete success, more than conqueror, with every ideal of last New Year realised, every hope fulfilled, every good resolution achieved. We are all cripples. Man himself is a cripple. Not the result of rheumatics or a motor car accident. We may have escaped broken necks, broken arms and broken legs. But some have had their heart broken in 1928, others their spirit, others again some hope or plan or resolve. This old world has a many disheartened, disappointed, discouraged folk.

"The best laid schemes o' mice and men
Gang aft agley."

Business has been bad, work not to be had, someone we care for has gone wrong, the ship we expected has not come to port; we have not come up to scratch or ill-health has knocked us out.

But under the influence of "that New Year feeling," a sort of Kruschen feeling in the soul at the beginning of another year's adventure and opportunity, we Tiny Tims revive and lift up our head and shout, "God bless us every one." There is not a morning that is not a new beginning and another chance of being better, bigger and cheerier than we were yesterday, if only we refuse to be the slaves of ordinary dull routine and circumstance, and have a mind, constantly renewed, to "rise on stepping stones of our dead selves to higher things." Life all the way through is death and resurrection; it means dying and rising again every time.

New Year however is a very special morning that does not come every day; it closes the door on one stage of life and opens it on another. It brings new calls, new chances, new hopes; new possibilities. And everything depends on the faith and spirit in which we face them, on the ideal we set before us and the resolution with which we go forward. We must however believe that the new **can** be better than the old, that the best is yet to be, and we must have the undaunted will. Life is a prayer, a conflict in which the purse is the soul, and we must never despair of victory. Let us remember that whatever is taken from us, nothing is lost, if we win and keep the soul. **It** is the pearl of great price, and it lives shining beneath the waves and tides and storms of life, waiting for those who steadily seek and bravely dive for it.

Robert Louis Stevenson had a tough time of it, he had stern drawbacks and bad set-backs, but he kept the heart of the hunter for life's hidden treasure, and of the believer in it, and he knew well what he was saying when he wrote "O toiling hands of mortals! O unwearied feet! Soon, soon it seems to you, you must come forth on some conspicuous hill-top, and but a little way further against the setting sun, descry the spires of El. Dorado. Little do ye know your own blessedness, for to travel hopefully is better than to arrive, and the true success is to labour." To a friend who had begun to think it was no use trying, that his ideal was too difficult, Henry James the great writer said "Too difficult indeed; yet there is one way to master it, which is, to pretend consistently that it isn't." That is the secret. Never despair, go on, and though you may never grasp the ideal, your's will be the unfailing joy and happiness of getting nearer to it, which is the best life affords. The New Year will be a very happy one for you if you meet its haps and hazards with a brave

heart, and so too you will make it less hard and more happy for others. When **we** win through, others win through **us.** Is not that the very marrow of Christian doctrine? When we rise to the height of the Christian argument we shall have not only a New Year but a New Era.

But how is it to be done? Is it not too much like telling us to catch the bird by putting salt on its tail, or to lift ourselves up by pulling our own ears? What is the prescription for strength? Well I can only say, live near to God. Keep close to Him through prayer. In presence and atmosphere, an influence is felt streaming into the soul which restores a sense of the reality of the best and finest things in human life and keeps belief and hope in them alive. There we become convinced again that the ideal is omnipotent and must ultimately prevail, that the rest is only error and shadow and nonsense. And when we meet in the church others who live near to God and have the same conviction, spiritual power becomes organised, by which the evil of life can be defeated and the weariness in well-doing overcome. Our church will thus become a massed spiritual power that will make itself felt in the world as a saving power. Then it will draw men to it and enter on a new day of influence. Men will be glad to serve it when it shows it can render such service to men.

Live near to God in the New Year and see whether all things will not become new, brighter and better. "God bless us, every one."

R. Nicol Cross.

Here we stand on the threshold of a New Year. We have reached another milestone in the journey of life. We look back over the year that is bidding us adieu, with mingled feelings of disappointment and satisfaction—of joys and sorrows, triumphs and failures. What has been the effect upon ourselves of the lessons of the year? Have we learnt anything by the way? Are we richer in character—purer in heart and mind—firmer in purpose—stronger in faith—more generous in charity? If we are not, the year of 1928 has not been a successful one for us—and it has left us at a disadvantage as we step forth to greet 1929.

The journey before us is through unknown territory—we are setting forth on an adventure and we shall need a measure of the adventurous spirit if we are to make a successful journey.

As a church, we have much cause for gratitude. Ours is a fine tradition in the life and work of faithful men and women of the open vision—men and women of freedom who used their freedom wisely, whose memory is hallowed and revered.

The reward of their labour is to be found in the ever-growing multitude of Christian people, who, to-day, openly profess religious opinions, which our fore-fathers proclaimed amid hostility and ostracism. We have entered into their labours—the torch which they held aloft so nobly and courageously, is now in our hands—may its radiant witness be as manifest in our hands as it was in theirs.

We view with sadness the poverty and suffering so prevalent in our land, and we earnestly pray that the New Year may usher in a nobler, happier time for our country—that every home may enjoy peace and prosperity ere many of its days are run.

Let us all be up and doing to help in making this nobler, happier time possible. It can only be realised by a united effort and sacrifice. Let us help those in authority to bring it to pass.

Our numbers may be few—but on the record of public service, philanthropy and good citizenship, the sons and daughters of our Church have an honourable place. We have this exemplary tradition to maintain—we owe it to their memory who now rest from their labours, that it shall be maintained by us.

Ours is a living faith that demands high and noble action for its true expression. The path of service and progress is a thorny path. We know not what trials and difficulties may confront us in the year now dawning, but let us remember that "to have faith is to create—to hope is to call down blessing, and to have love is to work miracles."

We repeat—it is an unknown country we enter—and he is wise who enters it in God's name and in His strength.

Therefore, from the milestone we have now reached, we bid you God-speed to the next milestone—and beyond!

J. Glynn Davies.

N.B.—Communications for February to be sent to Rev. D. J. Williams, The Manse, Killinchy, Co. Down. For March and subsequent issues editorial correspondence to be addressed to Rev. S. P. Whitehouse, 107 *Fitzroy Avenue, Belfast.*

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Notes of the Month.

The King's Illness.

Deep sympathy has been evoked throughout the civilized world with his Majesty King George and the Royal Family in the grevious illness which has overtaken him. His loyal subjects both at home and throughout the Empire are deeply touched by the evidence of the profound respect and affectionate regard by which their gracious Sovereign is universally held.

New Year's Greetings.

THE EDITORSHIP AND THE NEW YEAR.

A Happy New Year to all our readers! We wish a fruitful time to our whole Church connection in the year that is all untrod. May every good word and work stimulate us to greater endeavour in well-doing.

As the notes in last month's issue of this magazine were in the press, to our great regret, we received the intimation that the Rev. S. P. Whitehouse—who had kindly consented to take over the editorship from the New Year ownards—had received orders from his doctor to take a complete rest for a few weeks. He will be away from home at least till about the middle of January. Will correspondents kindly send their contributions for the February issue to the old editor? For the March number all editorial matter must be sent to the Rev. S. P. Whitehouse, 107 Fitzroy Avenue, Belfast. We regret the temporary breakdown in health of our new editor, but are happy to believe that he needs only rest and quietude to restore his usual activities.

Within the past year or so illness has overtaken several of our ministers and it has been a disquieting feature in our midst. May it not be due to the nerve-racking conditions of modern life, the economic uncertainty which besets all ranks of society, the absorption in materialistic pursuits which leave little or no leisure for men to possess their souls in peace? Does it not mean that human society as time goes on is organising itself apart from God? The Christian minister who is true to his calling cannot fail to be perturbed by such signs of the times. It cannot avail to say that he is disquieted in vain or that he need not be over anxious. It is his business to be anxious and to make the gospel alive and flourishing in the world. His conscience respects the exhortation of the 1st Epistle of John: "love not the world or the things of the world." To the best of his ability he must discountenance "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life," for the external world seeks after these things to an extreme limit. He has frequently to remind himself that stratas of the secular life of men are sunk in ignorance and wickedness knowing neither Christ nor the true disciples of Christ. Thus we feel that the true work of the Christian minister is largely of the unworldly kind and the results are not likely to be outwardly striking. The secular mind of our times hardly ever takes account of his devotion; but an earnest and steady witness to the Gospel of Christ on his part and a few like him will be of immense value. The Christian ministry in its heart knows that the world is not absolutely depraved. In fact it has a conscience which causes it disquiet. It is not satisfied with itself. "The hidden man of the heart in each man longs to play traitor" to the evil influences abounding in the world. The work of the Christian ministry is not finished, nay it is hardly begun. It needs all the encouragement and sympathy of men out in the world engaged in business pursuits. Co-operation of this nature between the Spirit of Christ and men of affairs will become more pressing and needful in the New Year now dawning than ever it has been in the past.

Good Wishes to the New General Assembly.

The members of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland, without exception, will extend to the GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF UNITARIAN AND FREE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES their heartiest congratulations and good wishes for the success of that Assembly in this first year of its existence as a corporate body. The Union of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association and the Triennial Conference is an act long overdue in view of the fact that for a considerable period Union of organisations in the Christian Church has been long regarded as a consummation devoutly to be wished. The Churches in Great Britain have after some searching of heart taken their courage into their hands, have followed the example of their sister churches in the North of Ireland and have organised themselves into one body. It is true that organisation of an official nature cannot make a living church; for it requires men of an active spirit "with hearts wide open on the God-ward side"; but it is a long step towards co-ordinating the forces of righteousness in view of the evils of secularity which afflict human society.

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Our Ulster congregations brought closer together as a United Church have achieved closer sympathy for mutual sympathy and encouragement. It is to be hoped that the long view of the situation in the various congregations will more and more stimulate our people to feel the importance of the formula, "each for all, and all for each." In this country we are a small, isolated body of Christian congregations, have been and continue to be dependent for material help in more than one direction on the organisations in Great Britain. May this long continued connection be intensified in mutual understanding and fervent co-operation as the years pass. In the meantime the Non-Subscribing Church of Ireland will watch the development of the NEW ASSEMBLY with natural anxiety, it may be, but certainly with sympathy and every encouragement that can possibly be bestowed. That the Assembly's progress during the coming year may strengthen the forces of the moral life and spiritual religion throughout the length and breadth of the land is the final wish of its Irish friends.

* *

We understand that the Rev. Albert Whitford, has received an unanimous invitation to the pastorate of our church at Dundee, and that he has accepted the invitation. He has served our Church and the Moneyrea congregation for 13 years. We are sorry to lose one who has laboured faithfully both in his own church and on behalf of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church generally. We wish him and his family every happiness and success in their future career.

The Ulster Hall United Service.

The great Ulster Hall United Service was held on Sunday, November 25th, 1928, at 7 p.m., when the Moderator of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland, Rev. W. G. Marsden, presided. The Moderator announced the hymns and the Rev. A. M. Bell, B.A., engaged in prayer. The lessons were read by the Rev. R. Nicol Cross, M.A. The singing of the hymns by the great congregation both in volume and fervour was most inspiring. Two solos deepened the sense of the worshipful spirit which prevailed throughout, the one by Mr. T. Corlett giving a fine rendering of Mendelssohn's, "If with all your heart," the other by Miss V. E. Curran, L.R.A.M., of Cowen's "Come unto Me." Two addresses were delivered during the service, the first being by the Rev. C. W. Townsend, Missionary Agent of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association. His subject was "Mankind : the Apex of Creation." In the course of which he pointed out that it was a mistake to depreciate man's place in the scheme of things. In everyone if us, however much we have marred God's handiwork, there was something of Himself. Surely the only religion of any value to God was that of human brotherhood which set a right relation between the individual, the community and the nation? This idea was struggling for a greater measure of expression to-day, and we should be thankful that God seemed to be coming to His own. The Rev. R. Nicol Cross, M.A., of the First Prebyterian Church, Belfast, followed on the same lines as Mr. Townsend and in a very effective manner emphasised the theme of the previous speaker. Mr. Cross said, "It is not very heartening to think that because the first marriage was a failure, God had decided to take it out of the children. Christ did not preach man's fall, depravity and impotence, but proclaimed that there was a Kingdom waiting for men. You must work out your own salvation because God worketh in you. Do not get saved from the penalties hereafter, but from the ignorance, vice and superstition which is so crippling and degrading life here." Both speakers with no uncertain sound gloried in the rise of man from low, halting beginnings to the comparative meliorating influences of modern civilization. They intimated with convincing clearness that too much stress has been laid on man's downfall, and that it is incumbent on us to help to lift men up that, in Christ's words, they may become children of their Father in heaven. Credit is due and is hereby given to the members of the Laymen's League for the organising ability which they displayed in securing the success of this annual gathering. It has now been in existence for many years. We congratulate the laymen on the success and on the numbers who gathered together for worship on this occasion. The objects of the Laymen's League are worthy of being more widely known. They are as follows :" To promote the worship of God and the Love and Service of Mankind in the Spirit of Jesus Christ."

In Memoriam.

MARGARET ELIZABETH PORTER, daughter of the late Rev. John Scott Porter (minister of the First Presbyterian Church, Belfast, 1832-1880). Died 4th December, 1928. aged 80 years. From sermon preached in the First Presbyterian Church, Belfast, by the Rev. R. Nicol Cross, M.A., December 9th, 1928. Isaiah 40 : 8. "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand for ever."

This ancient House of God has stood through many generations as a sanctuary, a place of peace, where men and women could come to honour whatever has worth in human character and life, where they could nourish within their heart the reverence for whatever things are true, just, honourable, lovely and of good report. It is part of our religion to see some ray of the Divine in all these qualities wherever or by whoever they are manifested, and part of our delight to recognise them and bear witness to them.

For that purpose and to that end we gather this morning. Some touch of sorrow and regret no doubt mingles with the mood of all of us who knew Miss Porter, and it will be deepest in those who have known her longest; who for many a long year have been familar with her face, enjoyed her friendship and who together have worshipped and worked with her here, together walked along life's pathway, and encountered the changes and chances of this earthly pilgrimage.

In losing Miss Porter, we lose one whose roots go deep down into the past of this Church. She was the daughter of the Rev. John Scott Porter, who was installed as colleague and successor to the Rev. William Bruce as far back as 1832; and who carried on the preceding succession of remarkably long and distinguished ministries, down to 1880. She was fortunate in being born into a home rich in the best influences of the mind, where piety, culture and industry united to make high ideals effectively real in everyday life. Everything was done as "under the great Taskmaster's Eye," and life was set forth as a noble calling ; in the words of a great religious statesman, it was conceived not "as a low grovelling thing which we are to get through as best we can, but as an elevated and lofty destiny."

It may be said that such was the interpretation of life's meaning which was accepted and honoured in the homes of many of our own faith in those days when the Puritan conscience still survived and the highest standards of character and conduct commanded unflinching obedience as being the voice of God Himself.

The traditional Unitarian type of piety associated also with the old Presbyterian Churches in England was not emotional or revivalistic, but it was strong and deep ; it did not make loud professions of religion for it found more natural and easier means of expression in practice and public service.

The writer of the "Historic Memorials of the First Presbyterian Church," described the type as it flowered here in Belfast in the old days into institutions of business, culture, philanthropy and charity: "A good home religion, a good Monday religion, a good business and market religion, a religion of week-day duties and veracities, and generosities and charities ; . . . a religion that keeps the heart clean and the conduct straight ; this is the religion that commands our suffrages, holds our esteem, and animates our ideal of the life that best serves God."

And who will say that such a religion is ever antiquated, or out of date ? Belfast has suffered in recent times for the want of it. It is just the sort of religion that our country most needs, a religion that proves itself in honesty, uprightness, sound conscientious workmanship and service, and lays more store by education and the quieter processes of the soul in the sure uplifting of a people than by the more sudden and spectacular agencies of religions which subordinate the reason to the emotions and equate the supernatural with the cataclysmic.

It is hardly to be wondered at when one considers her parentage and home that the family to which she belonged should have given a number of distinguished men to the world, including Sir Andrew Marshall Porter, Master of the Rolls in Ireland for 23 years and the Honourable William Porter, for some time Attorney-General at Cape Town, South Africa. The Rev. John Scott Porter, her father, held for short periods Professorships of Theology and of Hebrew, and published a study on "Principles of Textual Criticism." It was a family of able and scholarly men of character, and public spirit, and women of sterling piety and incessant industry, adorned by the domestic virtues.

It is fitting that this morning in paying our tribute of respect and regard to one whose character and standards were nurtured

under the influences of that older generation, we should render our homage to the faithful men and the good women whose life commended the faith on which and for which our church has stood, to whom we owe it that we have this sanctuary, as a witness to the spiritual realities and the eternal hopes and truths of men, and as a refuge and strength amid "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune," by which at times we may be sore beset.

And so we say, "nothing is here for tears nothing but well and fair." For to us death itself is not terrible. For us it is surrounded with no dread imaginations, nor clothed in terrors. Death is just an incident in the mighty majestic order of Divine life—one brief syllable in the great living word of God. "The grass witherth, the flower fadeth, but the Word of God shall stand for ever." All fulfils His will and serves His purpose for ever within the vast illimitable ranges of His creation. And in that will and purpose, vast and wonderful beyond all dream or understanding of ours is all our good, our consummation, all and more than all that we can desire or ask. Beyond sight or thought or speech of ours moves that majestic cosmic Will, which bears all within its bosom, in its unfathomable and boundless heart, to the glory that cannot be revealed.

"No more to wander mid the things of time
No more to suffer death or earthly change
But with the Christian's hope and faith sublime
Through all Thy vast eternal scenes to range."

To us however is left the memory of what she was and did among us; her long and faithful loyalty and service to this church, her participation in its institutions and fellowship in its work; her friendship, and kindly acts of charity to others, her helpfulness and support of good causes; her sense of duty and fidelity to conviction, her interest in the things of the Spirit and her unspoken witness to religion by the tenour and quality of her life and aims.

"Religion" said Principal John Caird, one of the greatest minds in the Scottish Church, "Religion is the art of being and doing good; to be an adept in it is to become just, truthful, sincere, self-denied, gentle, forbearing, pure in word, thought and deed. ....The world passeth away. The things that are seen are temporal. Soon business with all its cares and anxieties,—the whole 'unprofitable stir and fever of the world' will be to us a thing of the past.. . . But no work done for Christ perishes. No action that helps to mould the deathless mind of a saint of God is ever lost....The river of life sweeps on, but the gold grains it held in solution are left behind and deposited in the holy heart."

As we think again of our forerunners here who received from Christ, the Master-Christian, that simple but ever sublime "religion of being and doing good," and sought in some measure to be true to it in their faith and life, may the same spirit that was in them wake within us, that the world may see that the mould has not been broken, the succession has not ended, the inheritance has not been lost; that whatever fades and withers of modes of thought and custom, the Word of God still speaks, still stands among us as of old, still commands the same obedience and consecration, still sheds a glory through the hearts of men and on the face of things.

The New Year.

"Old things have passed away, behold all things are become new." The spirit of the age, on the rising crest of the wave, with arms outstretched cries aloud, "Behold I make all things new." The life that maketh all things new, is the builder, is also the destroyer. "Old buildings have to be pulled down, old slums cleared away, to make room for the new city. Thus is it with the new era that is now upon us. The Great War meant the close of the old era, and the years since have been years of readjustment and getting rid of remnants of the old order which still remained to hamper. Right down through every department of life, in religion, in politics, in labour, in social customs, in commerce, in science and art, the liberated life has been at work shaking off the outworn and useless, and building new forms.

Very rapid are the changes now being made, very powerful are the forces which are at work, and hard to stand against.

In days gone by, our church and its kindred church across the water have been criticised for their inclusiveness, for however strong in them may have been any one school of thought at any time, even at the reproach of being "Nothingarian," they have not allowed themselves to be bound by any orthodoxy, but have kept themselves "fluidic," for the life has more beautiful forms of thought and worship, to shape, than the past has ever known. When a

form becomes rigid and unplastic and of no more service to the life it is shattered, and thus the New Year calls us to respond to the strong life-urge ; and even if our forms of church-government and of worship are not as perfect as they might be, yet with heartiness and good-will they can serve their purpose, better even than types more fully hammered out, yet which prove fetters instead of helps. The fuller life means fuller happiness. Form and life are separate. Even the highest subtlest, sheath of the spirit that gives individualisation its form. Form makes us think that we are form, and thus we are often only led on from bondage to bondage, mistaking each one at which we arrive as freedom. We are beyond all form, we are life, and only in the life is there liberty. If, from where we are to-day, feeling we have yet a long and almost impossible way to go before we reach perfection, we can throw the line of our thought into the life itself, then we have attached ourselves to the further shore, to security, for life is the goal, life is perfection, and if we hold firmly to our life-line, whatever the whirl and the storms of outward passing events, we are united in will and intention to the supreme goal of life, and our progress towards it may be rapid. Life is the goal. Life is the teacher. Life is eternal bliss. Life is perfection. "Lay hold upon eternal life." "The life was manifested and we have seen it."

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Temperance Notes.

BY "SENEX."

Is Alcohol a Poison ?

This question raises a point of deep interest both to abstainers and non-abstainers. It is usual for speakers on the subject of Temperance to maintain that alcohol is a dangerous poison. Against this assertion will be brought forward by those who take a different view the experience of many men and women who have used habitually strong drink and yet have reached a vigorous and healthy old age. The conclusion arrived at by scientific men is given by Horsley and Sturge in their well-known book "Alcohol and the Human Body" as follows :—

> "It is interesting to note that alcohol is always included among the 'poisons,' and in the pharmacological classification of 'poisons' it is invariably placed side by side with chloroform and ether, and described as a narcotic poison. This is the position assigned to alcohol by the pharmacologists of all countries."

Alcohol and Long Life.

It is an undoubted fact that the habitual use of strong drink creates a large amount of toleration for the drug in some people, just as laudunum does. The organs of the body become accustomed to its presence, and the harmful effects are not felt to the same degree. But everyone is not given this power of resistance, and even where the injury is not generally observed, it may be present.

The authority quoted above states on this important point :—"This apparent toleration of alcohol is, in the majority of cases, only a deception ; for, when illness comes to a man of this type, it is found that his tissues show signs of being unduly disposed to inflammatory conditions, and that invading microbes and germs create undue havoc in spite of his naturally strong body and originally good endowments in the way of health. Moreover, the real condition of an apparently very strong and robust man who habitually takes large quantities of alcohol will be often demonstrated by the decadence of his children and grandchildren, who are frequently epileptic, mentally defective or vicious, and of impaired vitality."

Popular Control of the Supply of Alcohol.

It does not therefore seem unreasonable to ask that the power to limit, or to cut off altogether, the amount of this dangerous drug offered for public sale should be placed in the hands of those whose well-being is concerned. Temptation meets the young at every corner. Rich men can choose, and do choose, to live far away from the public-house. The poor are compelled by their circumstances to tolerate the bar-room at their very door. This seems unjust. Local Option will give to men and women of all classes the opportunity to protect themselves and their children against the evil thing. If Temperance workers are mistaken and the result proves that fathers and mothers regard the public-house as meeting a widely-felt need then not one saloon will be closed through Local Option. But if the issue should be different, then a chance will be given to the rising generation to use their talents to the fullest extent such as their ancestors never experienced.

Congratulations to the United States.

And surely every worker for Local Option will feel greatly confirmed and strengthened in his attitude by the great victory scored for Prohibition in the recent Presidential Election across the Atlantic. It was strongly suspected that propaganda was the purpose of the numerous paragraphs appearing in the press suggesting in insidious ways that Prohibition had utterly failed. The American people have now left no doubt by their action that all that pessimistic news was lies. They have found Prohibition a good thing, and they are determined to keep it. We must follow their example.

Visit of Rev. C. W. Townsend.

Under the auspices of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland and the Unitarian Laymen's League a Mission in Northern Ireland has been conducted by the Rev. C. W. Townsend, Missionary Agent for the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches.

The mission opened at Larne, November 18th and 19th, and was continued as under: Mountpottinger, November 20th and 21st; Women's League, First Church, November 21st; Greyabbey, November 22nd; Domestic Mission, Belfast, November 23rd; York Street, Belfast, November 24th and morning 25th. Ulster Hall evening, November 25th; First Church, Belfast, November 26th to 30th; Newry, December 2nd and 3rd; Banbridge, December 4th and 5th; and a Farewell Social in Central Hall, Belfast, December 6th. All the meetings have been well attended especially at the Ulster Hall, where there was an audience of 1,200, and in the country churches the meetings were also very successful.

The week-evening meetings in Belfast attracted wide interest as the keen questioning and discussions witnessed.

This effort has been very highly appreciated and has succeeded in awakening in the community a very earnest wish to know more of our principles and teaching.

The best thanks are due to the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches for their generous action in so promptly acceding to our request for Rev. C. W. Townsend's services and to all the friends who by their help have rendered it possible to carry this mission to a successful conclusion.

A New Commentary on the Holy Scripture, including the Apocrypha.

Bishop Gore has introduced a keen sword of controversy into the Anglican Church by his editorship of "The New Commentary on Holy Scripture," published by the S.P.C.K. December 1st. Cloth boards, 16/- net.

Two distinguished editors are associated with him—Dr. H. L. Goudge, and Mr. Alfred Guillaume—but the criticisms and protests of the conservative thinkers in the Church will be thrown at the head of the Bishop. Dr. Gore, in fact, as every intelligent churchman is aware, adopts modernity with a conservative bias, as he did years ago in "Lux Mundi." But the conclusions stated in this new commentary will fill with dismay and confusion literally thousands of good Church people—principally those advanced in years—who believe their Bible as true from cover to cover.

As regards the Bible itself, Bishop Gore blames the Church for pressing upon its members the infallibility of the book in all respects. He admits that our Lord recognised the word of God in the Old Testament scriptures, and He recognised in the Church of the Old Covenant an interpretative authority; but, on the other hand, of the actual conclusions of this Church authority, as presented to Him by the contemporary holders of it, He was deeply critical. He declared them to be perilously wrong.

Amongst the many examples that may be quoted of the modern interpretation given by Bishop Gore and his fellow editors are the following:

Genesis does not give an account of the real beginnings either of the earth itself or of man and human civilsation upon it.

"We must admit that the records of Genesis are to a large extent legendary in character, which is only natural, since they go back to remote antiquity and were handed down orally through many generations before they were written."

The Fall of Man.—"This chapter is undoubtedly based upon Babylonian attempts to account for human mortality."

Story of the Flood.—"That this story of a universal deluge covering the whole earth so as to submerge the highest mountains cannot be historical hardly needs demonstration. To collect pairs of animals from all quarters of the globe into one place would be a manifest impossibility, even could an ark have been built capable of containing them."

The Ten Plagues.—As the events which preceded the Exodus were committed to writing four centuries or more after the time of Moses, it is not to be expected that these stories should be "exact recollections of actual facts."

Balaam's Ass.—"The tale of how Balaam's ass spoke is not really different in kind from many another wonder tale in the Old Testament."

Jonah and the Whale.—"Of course there is no atom of history in all this."

The Virgin Birth.—Bishop Gore, who himself writes on the Virgin Birth, takes a conservative view on this occasion. He accepts the idea of the Virginal Conception—the new creative act of God—as deeply congruous. He states, however, that no one would claim for it anything like the strength of evidence which there is for the miracles of the life or for the resurrection.

Destruction of the Swine.—This miracle is admitted to create a difficulty. The writer states "that it is another illustration of our changed attitude to the infallibility of the Bible record that we should like to think Mark is in error in connecting their destruction with anything said or willed by our Lord."

From beginning to end this scholarly commentary is full of points that conflict with the old-time view of the events recorded in the Bible. It will cause the Fundamentalists, both in this country and America, to shriek with dismay. I have recorded only a few of its remarkable conclusions. The critic can find hundreds.

To the younger generation the commentary will appeal as an honest attempt to meet the difficulties of the Bible in a reasonable spirit and in the light of modern scholarship.

Boys and girls with the advantages of secondary education do not to-day accept the Biblical interpretations of their elders. They are in revolt against conclusions that have been presented to them by clergy and others, and turn with disgust from a faith that will not accord with their instruction at school. Dr. Gore gives them a chance. He shows what is the reasonable meaning of these Bible stories, and paves a path for them by which they can secure faith as well as freedom.

C. T. BATEMAN in "The Daily News,"
Dec. 1st, 1928.

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Report.

Holywood.—The Annual Meeting of the First Presbyterian (Non-Subscribing) Congregation was held after morning service on Sunday, December 16th. The Chairman (Mr. W. Patterson) proposed the adoption of the Committee's report and the Hon. Treasurer's Statement of Accounts, which latter shewed a substantial balance on the right side. Mr. F. A. Robinson (Hon. Treasurer) seconded, and the resolution was unanimously carried. On the motion of Mr. R. Steele, seconded by Mr. W. J. Harvey, the Committee and officers for the ensuing year were elected as follows :— Committee : Mrs. Sharman D. Neill, Mrs. Gardiner, Mrs. Robinson, Mrs. Maginnis, Miss Praeger, Miss Malcolm, Sir John Campbell, M.D., M.P., Dr. C. C. Greenfield, Messrs. W. H. Niall Nelson, R. Steele, J. Meneely, J. M'Kelvey, C. J. M'Kisack, W. K. Graham, H. Shannon, jun., and W. M'Nair ; Hon. Secretary, Mr. J. Shannon, jun. ; Hon. Treasurer, Mr. F. A. Robinson ; Hon. Auditor, Mr. W. Patterson. Mr. F. A. Robinson was re-elected to represent the congregation on the Board of Governors of the Sullivan Schools, Holywood. A hearty vote of thanks was accorded to the members of the choir on the proposition of Mr. W. K. Graham, seconded by Mr. J. Shannon, jun., and the Chairman was thanked for his services in the Chair.

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Pulpit Honesty.

[Notes from sermon preached by Rev. Sydney P. Whitehouse, in All Souls' Church, Elmwood Avenue on Sunday Evening, 9th Decenber, 1928.]

To-day is Bible Sunday. In many of the churches of Belfast and elsewhere sermons will be preached on the Bible.

One wonders how many of these sermons will represent exactly what the preachers feel about the Bible and how many of them will represent what they are supposed to feel about the Bible by the masses of people who have few opportunities for examining it carefully and critically ?

It is safe to say that the vast majority of people who are unacquainted with the history of the Bible will still be unacquainted with it after hearing to-day's sermons.

It is not a case of the blind leading the blind, it is a case of the enlightened leading the blind. In other words people will still be told to read what is on the lines by ministers who read what is written between the lines. They will still hear emphasis placed on what lies between the covers of the book, by ministers who believe that emphasis must be placed on what lies behind the book. They will still hear about the special creation of the Bible, from those who believe in the evolution of the Bible.

Pulpit reticence on these matters involves an extremely serious issue, an issue that goes to the root of all morality. It involves a question of honesty. There is no reason why pulpit honesty should be on a lower level than legal or business honesty. In no place and at no time has God indicated that we are allowed to be less honest in religion than in any other sphere. Yet it cannot be denied that in orthodox Christianity we get more double meanings, more figurative language capable of two interpretations, more evasions of the real points

at issue, more statements made with undeclared reservations, than in any other sphere of human activity.

In no place is language used so loosely as in the pulpit and yet there is no place which calls for more guarded, careful and definite statements of religious belief.

What sort of teaching would Jesus have given if He had taught not what He believed Himself but what He was expected, as a Jewish citizen, to believe? How far would Christianity have spread if Paul had kept to the pharisaic teaching of his tutors? And so we may ask how far can religious truth spread if the man who is trying to give it utterance is tied down in advance to certain theological dogmas and doctrines?

Reports.

Ballyclare.—Under the auspices of this branch of the Ulster Women's League, a religious service was held on Sunday, the 9th December. Despite the Arctic conditions of the weather there was a fair attendance. Mrs. E. R. Jackson conducted the service, and the rapt attention of the congregation was an eloquent tribute to the speaker. For the Second Lesson, Mrs. Jackson read a poem, "The Mothers at the feet of Jesus" and this and her subject, "The Motherhood of God," treated in her own inimitable way, was soul-inspiring, we all felt "it was good to be here." It was our initial religious service and Mrs. Jackson has set us a very high standard.

The musical portion of the service was in the capable hands of Mrs. Moore, A.L.C.M. The singing of her well-trained choir was beautiful and tuneful throughout. Her own glorious voice was never heard to better advantage than in the solo: "The Gift," which was exquisitely rendered. A contingent from Ballycarry braved the elements and so encouraged us by their presence. After the service the members of the League provided tea for the friends from a distance and for the members of the choir and a very happy social hour was spent.

* *

Templepatrick.—A very enjoyable and well-attended Concert was held in the Roughfort Public Elementary School, on Friday evening, 2nd November. The object in view was to assist the Church funds and as the expenses were light and the concert well supported the result was gratifying to all concerned. Instrumental items by Mrs. Finney, Messrs. Barnett and Gray (piano, violin and banjo), were thoroughly appreciated, as was Miss Sargent in humourous recitations. The Misses L. Watt, M. M'Cullough, B. Kirkwood and Messrs. J. Boomer and A. Reid all received well merited encores for the excellent rendering of their songs. At the close of the musical programme a Sketch was given by the Misses Hickey and Messrs. Hickey, Finney and A. Reid. This was full of fun and met with appreciative applause. Mrs. Finney presided at the piano throughout the entertainment. Oh Saturday evening, 17th November, members of the congregation with a few friends met in the same place to hold a social gathering and to say good-bye to Mr. A. Reid, who on the following week would leave for Australia. There was quite a good assembly, and we were greatly helped in the matter by the presence of Sir John and Lady Campbell, and their younger son, Mr. W. S. Campbell. The minister, Rev. A Turner, occupied the chair. After tea the chairman introducted the important item of the meeting, viz., the impending departure of Mr. Reid from this country. He spoke of the departure as a serious loss to our church, also to a wide circle of friends outside our church, and to various societies of one kind and another with which he had been connected. But he felt confident that our loss would be other people's gain as in addition to his social qualities, Mr. Reid would take with him his life-long principles of uprightness and integrity. Oh behalf of the congregation he wished him well and expressed his belief that Mr. Reid would come back again in every best sense of the word a success. Mrs. Turner then on behalf of members of the congregation and a few friends handed to Mr. Reid a cheque with an expression of her good wishes. Sir John Campbell spoke to the subject and whilst acknowledging our loss told many stories, some of them very amusing, out of his personal knowledge of three generations of the Reid's. Mr. Robert Thompson, added his good wishes. Mr. Reid who felt the seriousness of the moment thanked all for their kind gift and good wishes. Messrs. Harry Barnett and A. Reid (Craigarogan) played a duet on violins; Mrs. Archbald gave great pleasure with her songs; and Mr. A. Reid, the guest of the evening also sang. Miss Getty presided at the piano. The meeting closed with the benediction.

* *

Clough.—The Meeting House having been closed for six weeks for general renovation, during which period the congregation worshipped in Clough Public Elementary

School, with the kind permission of Dr. T. Cromie, was re-opened on Sunday, December 9th, on which occasion special services were held and which in spite of bad weather were well attended. The preacher was the Rev. W. H. Townley Tilson, M.A., of Greyabbey, whose eloquent sermons were very appropriate and highly appreciated. At the morning service, Mr. T. Fairley, Downpatrick gave an excellent rendering of Liddel's, "How lovely are Thy dwellings," and at the evening service, Miss M'Murray, Downpatrick, sung two solos, "Thy Task," and "Lead kindly Light," most impressively. Miss Madge Huddleston presided at the organ. The collections were in aid of the Renovation Fund. The following gentlemen kindly acted as collectors:—Messrs. Wm. Stranahan, J.P., W. H. K. Lowry, J.P., J. Currie, Dr. T. Cromie, J. G. Wilkin, B.E., George Armstrong, Andrew M'Cammon; Richard Maitland, Hugh Dickson, J.P., Hugh Donnan, Samuel Robinson, Hugh Shaw.

Newry.—On Wednesday evening, November 28th, the newly-installed organ at the First Presbyterian (Unitarian) Church. Newry, was opened in the presence of a large congregation, when Mr. Albert Taylor, A.R.C.O., L.R.A.M., gave a delightful recital, which went to demonstrate not only the ability of the organist but the beautiful tone and wide range of the instrument. The Church were fortunate in securing an organ of such calibre because it will add to the beauty of the services. Mr. Taylor, who is well-known in Belfast, where he is organist of the First Presbyterian Church, is a talented musician, who has often given recitals in England and Ireland. On this special and memorable occasion he was assisted by Mrs. Moore, A.L.C.M., Ballyclare, and Mr. James Laird, Belfast, both of whom gave artistic renderings of good songs. Mrs. Moore is no stranger to Newry, for she has been heartily welcomed to the town on previous occasions, but Mr. Laird, a popular bass in the city, was new to his hearers. The Church was filled to capacity both morning and evening on Sunday, December 2nd, when the special services in connection with the recently installed organ were continued, the special preacher on both occasions being the Rev. C. W. Townsend, minister at large, of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches. The congregation at both services included many adherents of other Protestant churches. Mr. F. D. Burrows, organist of All Soul's Church, Belfast, presided at the organ, and the skilful manner in which he manipulated the instrument added much to the impressive sweetness and dignity of the musical portion of the services. Preaching at the morning service, the Rev. Mr. Townsend said: "The art and essence of the worship of God was the appreciation of God's handiwork in nature, and the greatest thing in nature was the human soul. The surest and most direct way to the Father's heart was by way of a true understanding and appreciation of all the children of the Father's family, the sense of the worthship of every living soul, and the attempt to order human life in all its ramifications in accordance with the standards of the kingdom of heaven." At the evening service almost every seat in the Church was filled. The musical part of the service included the solo, "He shall feed His flock," by Mrs. Ervine, Belfast, and a carol entitled "The Legend," in both of which her splendid soprano was listened to with wrapt attention. The pulpit was again occupied by Rev. Townsend. Preaching on the subject that religion is the music of the Infinite in the human heart, Mr. Townsend, said: In an exposition of the 118th Psalm, "The half of music was to have grieved." The true joy-note of religion was heard in the lives of those who created melody out of the jarring facts of life, because their life in God enabled them to view life's experiences with a true perspective. They were people of simplicity, who realised that the art of living was to know how to give one's life in the service of man and the worship of God, in the Spirit of Jesus Christ. The collections were in aid of the Organ Fund at both services, and a very liberal response.

Mountpottinger.—During the past month the purchase was completed through private sources of a large two-manual organ. The old instrument which had done service for well over 30 years was in need of replacement and a favourable opportunity having arisen of securing a reliable instrument at a reasonable figure the Church Committee decided to make the purchase. When necessary adjustments have been completed it is anticipated by our Organist that he will be able to add to the musical side of our worship. In view of the existing bank overdraft an Organ Fund has been arranged to raise the necessary cash and thus relieve the Church Funds of any burden. Through individual and collective efforts a good start has already been made. The Annual Cake Fair and Sale of Work took place in the Schoolroom on Friday, December 14th. The Sale was graciously opened by Miss Hutton, of the Farm, Belfast, in the much regretted absence

of Lady Campbell due to the rather serious illness of Sir John. A bowl of lilies of the valley was presented to Mrs. Hutton, by Sarah McIlwrath. We were fortunate in receiving support from friends in our Churches both in the City and outside with the result that after meeting the few small expenses there will be a balance of something over £70 for the Church funds forming a welcome reduction of the bank overdraft.

Mountpottinger Branch of the Women's League.—A meeting was held on Wednesday November 28th in the Schoolroom. A paper was read by Miss Rita Crawford of Larne, on her recent visit to America. Sketches were presented by Miss Hogarth and Miss A. Montgomery, of Ballyclare. The appreciation of the meeting was expressed in suitable terms by Mrs. J. H. Ewbank, who was in the chair.

Stanhope Street Branch of the Women's League.—On Monday, December 17th, the ladies of the All Soul's Church Sewing Circle, gave a Christmas Tea to the members. Carols were sung and a musical programme presented. Xmas parcels were distributed. This branch re-opens on Monday, January 7th, 1929.

Obituary.

Mr. Robert Dick, Ballymoney.

We greatly regret to announce the death on 8th November, of Mr. Robert Dick, of Garry, Ballymoney, at the age of 49, after a year's illness, borne with great fortitude. He was the grandson of the late Rev. Joseph M'Fadden, minister from 1837-1861 of the Remonstrant Presbyterian Congregation of Ballymoney, and afterwards of the Old Presbyterian Congregation of Ballyclare, a pioneer of education and temperance in the Route district. Mr. Dick, who was the last surviving male member of a family which had been among the earliest settlers in North Antrim, was well-known and widely esteemed and was one of the largest and most capable farmers in the Ballymoney neighbourhood. He was at one time a member of the Ballymoney Amateur Operatic Society, and was for years one of the organists of our church in Ballymoney. He leaves a widow and a daughter, to whom we offer our sincere condolence in their great loss.

Mr. John R. Gray, Raloo.

The passing of Mr. John R. Gray on December 8th, after a brief illness, aroused wide spread sorrow among the community, He was a well-known and greatly respected farmer, a District Councillor and a Poor Law Guardian. A man of sterling character and sound judgment, who won for himself a wide circle of friends. He was a life-long member of our Church taking a prominent part in its activities and filling the position of treasurer for many years, with great satisfaction to the members. He was a most regular attender at Divine worship and his services on the Committee were keen and conscientious in the highest degree. Our sympathy goes out to all his relatives in their great sorrow. By no persons will his loss be more severely felt than by his fellow-worshippers at Raloo. The services in the house and at the graveside on December 10th, were conducted by his respected Pastor, Rev. John M'Cleery, who had the assistance of Rev. John Begg, Larne.

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